

FEATURING

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THE SUNDAY NIGHT

black & white

short fiction

illustration

photography



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black & white



Short Fiction - Photography - Illustration

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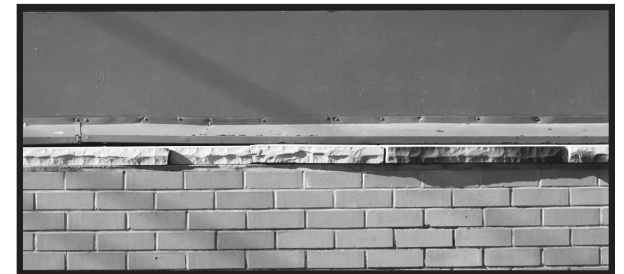
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You walked out from your garage with your bike. The bike was red and had dents from when you learned to ride. This is the suburbs, where the notion is stronger than perception. Outside the houses, the country sprawled for what seemed like forever. Nathalie lived out there. That was as far as you would venture and it was far enough. You had to lie to your parents to keep them happy. You were twelve and she was thirteen. Even though she was a teenager and you were a kid, she was still kind to you and made you feel grown up. She would smile when she saw you and that was enough to keep you coming back. She never came to you. Her house hid among the stalks of corn. The house was wooden and rotting. It was derelict and a bit more broken each time you saw it. You never went inside. You never saw her parents, Nathalie forbid it, but you did hear them. You walked together in a small forest behind the fields. You wanted to save her, but you were just a kid and you didn't know what she needed saving from.

You held the bike with one hand while the other was in a cast—it was a dark blue. Only Nathalie had signed it. She had used another name, Diana, which you both thought was a good idea. You had to get really close to see her signature and the inscription: "Get well soon." Your parents asked to sign it multiple times, but you would give an exaggerated sigh and explain how embarrassing that was. As you turned the corner,

you saw Mr. O on his porch. He was rocking back and forth a little in his chair. You looked at your feet as you crossed over from your driveway onto the sidewalk. The look on Mr. O's face always made you sad.

"Have you seen my Eurydice? I can't remember where she went," said Mr. O. The words seemed to bubble out from his throat only pop. You looked up and smiled apologetically. "Sorry, sir, I haven't. Have a good morning."

You biked away before he could say anything else, standing up on your bike and pedaling hard. Your backpack bounced as you pedaled. You pretended not to hear as you rode on, but you did. "I was supposed to follow her." Mr. O was already here when your family moved in and he probably always would be.

Her legs dangled further down than yours from the tree branch. Nathalie had a black eye, but you knew better than to comment. You never acknowledged the way she looked—she would always get upset when you did. You couldn't imagine how upset she would be if you ever drew attention to any proof of harm. It was as if she believed she was a floating formless entity and any reminder of a body would anger her and cast her back down into reality. You talked while she listened and then she would talk for a moment about books you hadn't read or things you didn't understand. You reached into your backpack and pulled out some food. Her stomach was big and swollen outward. You didn't ask. When her mouth was full your stories became outrageous and exaggerated as you knew she wouldn't correct you. You would never eat. You brought her candy and chocolate mostly. Snacks, but never meals. Nathalie would never chew the food you brought unless it was absolutely necessary. She would let them sit on her tongue and melt. This meant she didn't talk a lot. You weren't sure if she didn't talk because she ate or if she ate not to talk, but I guess you didn't really care.

This sort of arrangement also meant a lot of silences. You would end them by complimenting her, but never her

appearance. "I love you," you said. She rested her head on your shoulder and you understood. You thought the silence stretched longer and deeper than ever before. It didn't. You waited until after she started a new candy before you broke the silence again. "I want to t—" you said before she cut you off with a shush. She had never made a sound while eating before so you knew how serious she was. You rested your head against hers and tried to live in the moment as much as a twelve-year-old could. You had an itch underneath your cast that you knew you couldn't reach without making a spectacle. You left it.

Mr. O sat on his porch and this was as much as you knew about him. You couldn't imagine him outside his scene. When he was inside, you imagined he was sitting in the same chair. It was hard to picture anything else. Your parents had told you his last name when you first moved in, but you had forgot it and were too embarrassed to ask again. His name sounded Greek or maybe Dutch. You would move out before he left his house. You knew this.

The baby lay on the wet leaves and twigs of the forest floor. It screamed and you scrunched your nose and clenched your fists—trying hard to not to cover your ears. It was covered in blood. There was so much more blood than you thought possible. Nathalie sat against a tree and looked at the baby whose limbs were curling and uncurling, scratching at the air. "What do we do with it?" she said. The heroes from your movies always knew what to do and you always imagined that when your time came you would save the day. But the day went on and you barely spoke. "I can't take it home," she said. You wanted to kiss her, but you knew it was not appropriate. You felt helpless and lost with her even though none of this concerned you. You had never loved her more than you did that afternoon.

Mr. O walked out onto his porch. The bundle was placed at the base of his chair. You were hiding behind some bushes in front of your house. You closed your eyes when you

heard the door open. You didn't want to know what was inside Mr. O's home—it would feel wrong knowing. Mr. O bent down and picked up the baby wrapped in your t-shirt. Mr. O held the baby up with straight arms. Your shirt fell. Mr. O smiled and began to cry. You left to go get your bike so you could tell Nathalie what happened. You didn't see Mr. O hug the bundle. You didn't hear him say, "Oh Eurydice, I'm so sorry." You biked away as fast as you could. You forgot to tell your parents you were going out. You didn't turn around to see Mr. O walking the away from you. You didn't know there was a river so close to your house. After hearing what happened you wished you did. You felt guilty for thinking that.

You biked as fast as you could and it still wasn't fast enough. You wanted to be with her. You wanted her to know. When you got there her house was quiet. You couldn't hear her parents. You didn't see their truck. You peeked through windows and saw the house was empty. You went into the woods. She wasn't there so you waited. You would've waited forever, but the sun set and you were scared of the dark. You never got to say goodbye and you didn't even know what you would have said. Your parents were worried sick. They didn't know where you were or what happened; they had been out looking for hours. They thought something terrible had happened. They didn't know it had. The next morning they sat you down and said that they knew how much you liked Mr. O, but you wouldn't be seeing him again. They told you he drowned in the river yesterday. They made it seem like an accident and hugged you and told you it was okay to cry. You did cry, but you cried for Nathalie. You were hurt, but more than that you missed her. You would follow her anywhere, but you didn't know her last name. You didn't know where she went.

You will move away next year. You will bike through the new town for the first few weeks every day trying to see if you can find her. You will forget the particulars of her face and struggle to remember what she looked like. You will still scan the faces of the women on your way to work. She could

have grown up to be any one of them. She was just a teenager and you were just a boy and faces change. You will learn this. You won't come back here for twenty years and when you do you it will be for her. You will see they built condos where her house used to be. The plumbing will be faulty and water will fall from the balconies. Tiers of water will add to one another as they fall from every floor. The water will rise until it is above the houses and then it will rise further still. You will dive underwater and swim away. Sometimes the decision to surface is as hard as the decision to dive.



You're the whole of me, you're their orgasms;

You wanted the shouting.

To dissolve, and become better,

To bits, this aftertaste; environment; fishing; that smell;

Place us and our flesh, they may rest us.

Brilliant whoever deaths, terrible looking kilometres away.

So long, fuck your pills; God's watching,
Understands the shouting.
MDMA wheels through late-night patience, bleeding,
Looking, blowing, making water, suburbia drug,
A line burns in worried grass, where nights choke off.
2:30 like really formative shade, butane diamonds,
Living and breathing, snorting genius,
Flammable vitality cast further under water;
Nearly part undone; puny, the wheels I keep.

Breaching mitts.
Skeleton connects bits of housing.
Neighbourhood, tongue,
Made of trees, grubby flesh, people.
Firetrucks, pills, lighters, telephone poles,
Toward together, we said, dying also,
It burned up into nothing but cracks,
So to the bird's ball, muscle-bound,
Where a bare-man laughs, connects away



Confronting my Haudenosaunee ancestors with a reflective look at the land they once inhabited, a discernible truth on the impact of colonial policies and the affect on Indigenous peoples.



“Together we will travel in Friendship and in
Peace Forever; as long as the grass is green, as long
as the water runs downhill...

...as long as the sun rises in the East
and sets in the West, and as long as our
Mother Earth will last.”

DEAR ORIGINAL KEEPERS,

ALEX JACOBS BLUM



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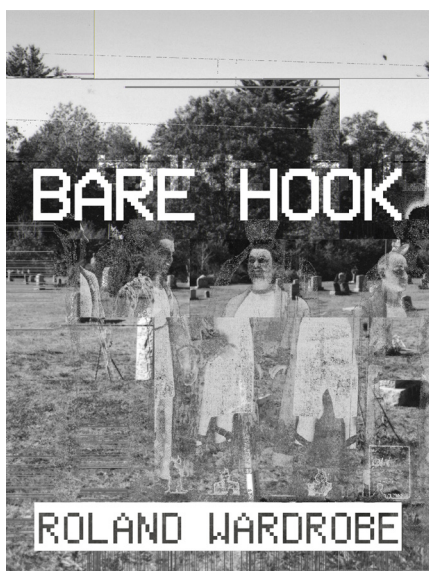




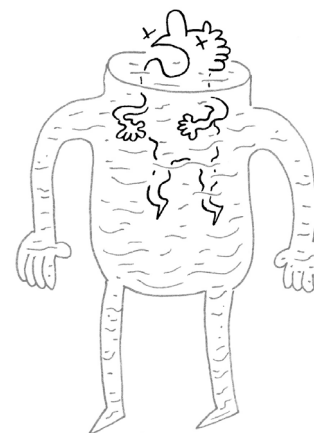








ILLUSTRATIONS BY BRIAN ROPPEL



We found an armchair on the side of the road and set it ablaze on the pitcher's mound. It was about 2:30 am, we were stoned and a little drunk and angry at nothing in particular. Three dollar-store butane lighters worked together to deliver a tiny flame that ate away at the old fabric and quickly fizzled out; eventually, it began to glow like a sort of modern effigy.

Sat up on the hill watching it burn up and disappear in the big empty diamond, we all drank a little, its peeling flesh exposed a rigid skeleton of warped dying wood. We heard sirens in the distance, they dotted the soundscape through the day becoming a natural part of the environment, like birds and trees and car horns and shouting. Those sirens were not for us, but we left anyway.

I was with a group of four or five people riding the bus to a neighbouring town to buy drugs, I had just tried Methylenedioxymethamphetamine for the first time. I wanted to connect with everyone, tell them that we are all one together, and we can feel and smell and taste each other's sadness, the bitterness sat on the tongue, letting it dissolve like a tab of acid, candy sweet, the powder at the bottom of a bag of Sour Patch Kids that makes your tongue bleed, crabgrass ripped from cracks in the pavement salty and dry from the sun, they didn't have to worry about finding a meaning to life; I was pretty sure I was finding it for them. Voyager of the mind,

adventurous young man becomes brilliant using hip new drugs, discovers secret to happiness, vitality, and multiple orgasms:

HIP NEW DRUGS!

The drug-filled placentas made us want to open up wide, deaths, heartbreaks and formative moments and what got us off, we wanted more and we wanted it right away, the drug led us onto a late-night bus headed toward some shitty, brutalist looking apartment building. Someone went inside to meet whoever was slinging pills our way, the rest of us waited at a park down the street. I pissed on a slide.

After the ride home I found myself at Loren's apartment. He lived in a place subsidized by the government, I never found out why but I imagined the possible scenarios.

Only a few people were left by now, I could see a couple snorting lines of crushed up Adderall off a bathroom tile, Loren and I were holed up in his room blowing cigarette smoke into the vent and writing awful poems.

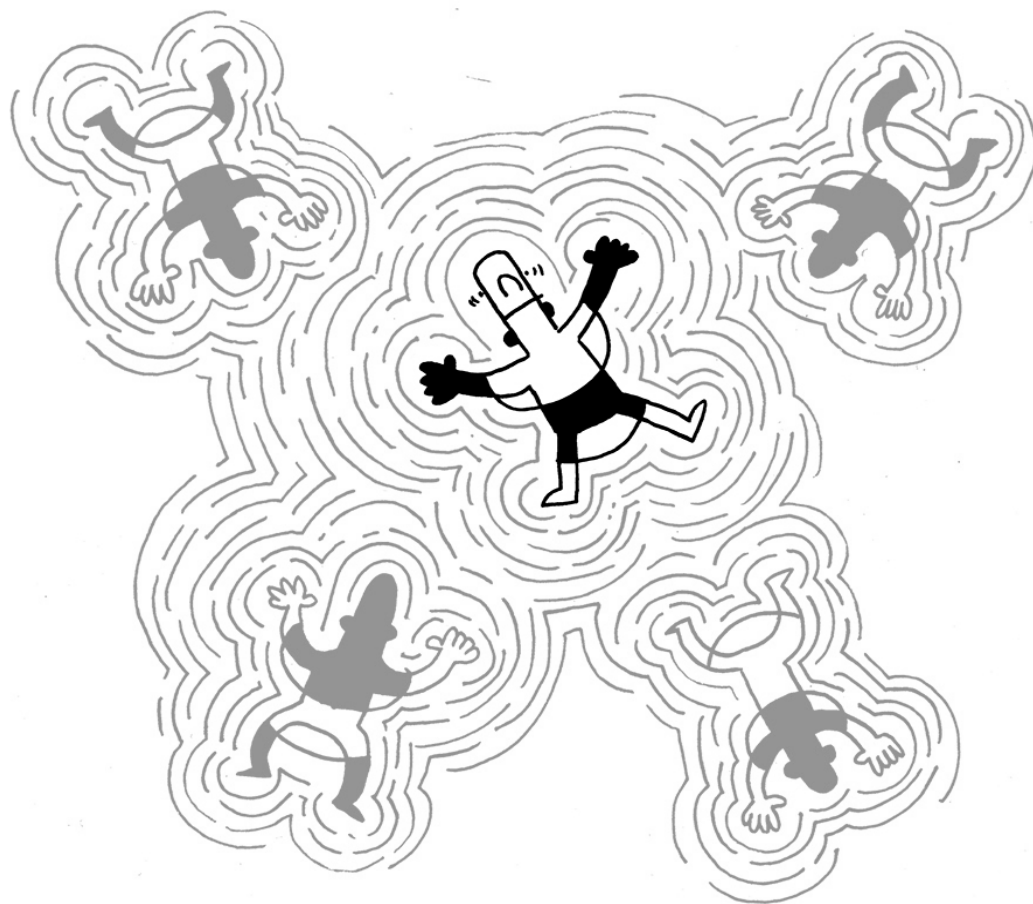
I'm writing a poem because life is sad,
I don't like cute stuff and I don't like school,
Nobody understands me, not even my Dad,
Everyone calls me dumb, they think I'm a fool,

I'd like to thank God for this life that sucks,
Actually, fuck you God and fuck your son, too,
Because you blessed me with super bad luck,
Fuck you, God and also fuck kangaroos.

Scary bipedal muscle-bound shit-wads,
They'll choke out your dog for looking their way,

They'll do it because fuck you, God,
You made all this shit this way.
So God can fuck off, and fuck off again.
Fuck off so hard he fucks around the bend.

MDMA was every weekend from then on, and the nights played out in the exact same way. I think everybody just longed to come undone, to feel they could spew out some phony emotional garbage and put all their guilt and depression into a coat-check, that's why I was doing it. It felt like emotional connection shouldn't exist, unless you were rollin' hard and deep; terrible aftertaste, best first bite.



Caleb and I would bike this trail that lead from our neighbourhood to a little grocery store two towns away. Nearly a dozen kilometres lined with long decommissioned and newly decomposing telephone poles. He had a mountain bike and much longer, generally better legs.

The way back was like a subway tunnel, wheels chirping and the smell of piss easing in, growing, a window to suburbia opening up as you sped toward it. There was a concrete dam with a bridge that lead to a power station, and huge metal drains spewing brown water into a shallow brown river. I would sometimes see turtles in there, wonder what was pouring out of those drains, what they thought of maybe living in diluted shit and piss. Aren't we all though, Shit Turtles?

There were a couple fishing rods at Caleb's Grandparent's place; we couldn't find any bait or tackle save for a tutty-fruity Jelly Bean and a couple of crickets we managed squish into our grubby mitts. I wanted out of the whole ordeal and sat under a tree, fidgeting with croquet balls; no chance of catching anything, really no reason to try at all. Caleb cast out, trying the crickets, then the jelly beans, then just the naked hook. "You're an idiot," I said.

"Don't call me an idiot," Caleb said. "Fishing is all patience, if I just keep doin' this something is gonna happen, I bet ya anything."

"That crappy hook is gonna make a real tasty-lookin' meal for a fish, eh?" I said, tearing up bits of grass and piling them atop a croquet ball, "They'd haveta be suicidal, and I don't think fish even really have the capacity for that."

"Or they could just be really stupid fish."

His determination was maddening, throwing his line into the water and reeling it in, over and over and over again. Couldn't he give the fuck up already? Sit in the shade and

pick at the grass? Over and over, the whoosh and the hiss and the click-click and the hiss and the click and the whoosh. Until the sounds stopped and Caleb's line snapped tight, he reeled in and laughed and shouted, you're the idiot, you're the idiot! Like a puny whale breaching the wake came a small-mouthed bass; pierced through the mouth by Caleb's bare hook, probably only five or six inches long. It pissed me off beyond belief. "This fish really musta been goin' through somethin'," Caleb said, looking down at his line.

"Well, yeah," I said, "or just really stupid."

"The hook went through its eye, though."



